

REMARKS

Claims 1-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,246,981 to Papineni et al.

In U.S. Patent No. 6,246,981 to Papineni et al., the Examiner apparently believes that column 13, lines 40-51 disclose context sensitive help. Column 9, lines 63-67 of Papineni et al. indicate that each return code is associated with an optional list of forms to be enabled. The Examiner apparently believes that the optional list is spoken to the user, and therefore the program enumerates the list of options. The Examiner apparently believes that the dialogue described at column 14, lines 20-40 indicates that the Papineni et al. method can switch between a global and a context sensitive help.

However, it is submitted that the Examiner's understanding of the reference is incorrect. Papineni et al. does not disclose a method/system for providing help information for a user in a speech dialog system for operating a background application, which system/method outputs, using the speech dialog system, the substates and transactions available in a respective substate in the event of detection of the global help command.

Papineni et al. discloses a method nearly to this issue, wherein so-called Backend Messages whose target is the backend 60 (see column 9, lines 58-62 and Fig. 1). According to Papineni et al., the backend messages encode the task to be preformed by the backend 60. The backend 60 attempts to perform the task described in the backend message, and returns a return code. Each return code is associated with an optional list of forms to be enabled, an optional list of forms to be disabled, an optional list of forms/slots to be cleared, and a message to the user reporting the status back to the user. See column 9, lines 62-67. According to Fig. 6 and column 6, lines 50-55, the message to the user does not contain the optional list of forms to be enabled. The message to the user only describes the backend task execution status.

Furthermore, according to sample script of Appendix A, given at column 13, lines 36 and 37 and at column 14, lines 33-39, only the following help messages are provided:

- 1.) "You can say or enter your account number,"
- 2.) "Purchase requires the name of the fund you want to buy and an amount,"
- 3.) "You said you wanted to purchase XY. You also need to specify an amount,"

- 4.) "You said you wanted to purchase a fund. However I'm not sure of the fund you want to buy. There are over XY funds matching your description. Please say the full name of the fund."

Therefore, the help messages only ask for the missing information to perform a desired task (account number, name of fund, amount). On the other hand, the help messages according the present invention present the transactions available in a respective substate. For example, referring to page 7, paragraph [0041] of the application, a prompt including the options corresponding to the state and context maybe output, such as the names of the fund available: "Say one of the following options: BASF, Siemens, Deutsche Bank,..."

Reffering to column 10, lines 18-31 of Papineni et al., after a login form is successfully completed, the transactions BALANCED-QUERY, WITHDRAW, and TRANSFER become possible. These transactions are not enumerated to the user. However, according to the present invention, a help message might set off an enumeration of all possible transactions. For example, the present invention might state: "You can: balance -query, withdraw, or transfer." See paragraph [0034] of the present application. Or, the present invention might conduct a yes/no dialog for each of these possibilities. For example, the present invention might state "Do you want to make a balance-inquiry?" See paragraph [0048] of the application.

It should be apparent that Papineni et al. does not disclose outputting, using the speech dialog system, the substates and transactions available in a respective sub-substate in the event of detection of the global help command, as claimed. Furthermore, as described below, these features would not have been obvious in view of the teachings of Papineni et al.

In Papineni et al., the user is not provided with the transactions available at a particular point in the dialog. Because of this missing information, the user does not know what he may say or which possibilities he has. In addition, the user does not know the conceptual model on which the background application is based.

The present invention addresses this problem with a help system, which supports the user operating a speech dialog system. Specifically, the present invention presents the user with the options available, and at the same time, does not overload the user with a huge amount of information. With the present invention, the user can request a context sensitive help at any stage of the dialog. For example, the user could say, "what is possible?" or "help." Then, the system would respond by outputting an overview of the valid possibilities available at the particular state.

To reach the aim of the invention, substates are defined for a hierarchical structuring of the help function. In contrast to tree-structured systems, where transactions and help functions are structured, with the present invention, the transactions are not required to be structured. The transactions can be arranged coequally according to the "flat earth" principle. The transactions can be independent from the help functions, which are structured. Graphically, this is shown in the drawings of the present application. Fig 1 shows the coequally arranged transactions T1 – T21 according to the "flat earth" principle. Figs 2-4 show the help function for these transactions being hierarchically structured by defining substates containing the transactions or transactions and further substates. As a result of this, the help output is clearly shortened. At the same time, the advantageous effect of having a huge number of transactions simultaneously and coequally available is retained. Papineni et al. does not mention or suggest the problem, and does not hint at any way to solve such a problem. Accordingly, the claims are both new and non-obvious in view of Papineni et al., and the rejection should be withdrawn.

There being no further outstanding objections or rejections, it is submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. An early action to that effect is courteously solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

STAAS & HALSEY LLP

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By: M.J.H.
Mark J. Henry
Registration No. 36,162

1201 New York Avenue, NW, 7th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005
Telephone: (202) 434-1500
Facsimile: (202) 434-1501